

Assemblymember Dario Frommer

Representing the 43rd Assembly District, Cities of Glendale, Burbank, and Los Angeles

2001 - 2002 Legislative Accomplishments

September 2002

2001 was very productive for the 43rd Assembly District. The Governor signed all 12 bills I authored that reached his desk, including legislation promoting Braille literacy, helping working mothers, and funding for urban parks and after- school programs. Legislation I introduced preventing the state Insurance Commissioner from taking free luxury trips around the world paid for by insurance companies, as well as expanding restitution funding for victims and child abuse prosecution programs were also signed. ♦

2002 was a difficult year given a \$24 billion state budget shortfall. In addition to being named the Chair of the Assembly Health Committee, I had 13 bills signed by the Governor. In total, I had 25 bills signed into law my first term in office. Included in that packet of legislation are measures to establish Braille reading standards for California's visually impaired students, age verification for purchasing tobacco products online, and an effort to close legal loopholes that allow child molesters and abusers to escape early prosecution and conviction. In addition, I successfully carried legislation to crack down on corporate abuse and prevent firms like Arthur Anderson from destroying audit documents to cover up illegal accounting practices. ♦

FROMMER AUTHORS LEGISLATION PROHIBITING INTERNET TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS

Assemblymember Frommer introduced AB 1830 in response to new university studies finding that a growing number of children are buying cigarettes on the Internet where vendors routinely fail to verify age. This measure establishes age-verification guidelines and requirements to prevent minors from purchasing tobacco products online. According to Assemblymember Frommer, "More and more kids are using the Internet to purchase cigarettes. Selling cigarettes to kids is wrong and illegal. Cigarette dealers pedaling cigarettes on the World Wide Web must be held to the same rules as those selling cigarettes at the corner store."

Studies on Underage Tobacco Use

- American Lung Association: 90% of smokers begin smoking before the age of 21.
- University of Southern California: Adolescents are turning to the Internet as an alternative source of cigarettes if they are unsuccessful in obtaining them from retail stores.
- University of North Carolina: Tobacco sales over the Internet are expanding significantly and within the next ten years will account for twenty percent of all cigarette sales.

LEGISLATION TARGETING CORPORATE ABUSE BECOMES LAW

Governor Davis signed Assembly Bill 2873 by Assemblymember Dario Frommer which will prohibit accountants from destroying audit documents and require them to retain audit documents for seven years. The destruction of audit documentation has become a key impediment to holding auditing firms accountable for shady accounting practices. For instance, in the Enron case, Arthur Andersen began legally destroying thousands of Enron-related documents prior to the federal investigation. In a training video by an Andersen official based in Houston, Texas, Michael Odom told employees last year: "If it's destroyed (referring to audit documentation) in the course of normal policy, and litigation is filed the next day, that's great, you know because we've followed our own policy and whatever there's been of interest to somebody is gone and irretrievable." With it's enactment, California will be the first state in the nation to require the retention of audit-related documents. ♦

Highlights of AB 1602, the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002

- ✓ \$832.5 million for local government park districts and community park projects
- ✓ \$260 million for urban parks
- ✓ \$200 million for coastal protection
- ✓ \$300 million for clean beaches, watershed protection, and water quality
- ✓ \$75 million to protect agricultural lands
- ✓ \$40 million to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (a portion of which may be used to purchase the Oakmont V property)
- ✓ \$245 million to protect other sensitive lands
- ✓ \$267.5 million to protect historical and cultural resources
- ✓ \$50 million to improve air quality
- ✓ \$20 million for conservation corps projects that put young adults to work repairing parks for resource conservation projects
- ✓ \$10 million for urban tree planting projects

FROMMER KEY PLAYER IN HISTORIC PARKS BOND AND URBAN PARKS BILL

GOVERNOR Gray Davis signed the largest park bond ever approved by a state, and a companion measure (AB 1481) by Assemblyman Dario Frommer to create and fund a historic new state program to help local governments and non-profits create new parks.

In March of 2002 Proposition 40 (AB 1602) was passed by the voters. It provides \$140 million for Frommer's Urban Parks Act of 2001, established by AB 1481. The enacted legislation is the first of its kind to help communities acquire and build new neighborhood parks, multi-purpose facilities, playground equipment, baseball diamonds and soccer fields. Applications are being accepted early next year for the program. ♦

ASSEMBLYMEMBER FROMMER TAKES THE LEAD TO PROTECT WATER SYSTEMS FROM HARMFUL CONTAMINANTS

Assemblymember Dario Frommer introduced AB 2481, which would strengthen state law regarding underground storage tanks and better protect the environment against releases of MTBE. This measure passed the Legislature and was signed into law by the Governor. In addition, Assemblyman Frommer co-authored SB 463 (Perata) to require the development of new standards for arsenic in drinking water and for additional information to be provided to consumers annually on the health effects of ingesting arsenic in drinking water. This measure passed the Legislature and was signed by the Governor on October 7, 2001.

LEGISLATION TO SPARE STUDENTS' BACKS BECOMES LAW

Governor Davis signed AB 2532 (Pacheco), co-authored by Assemblyman Frommer, to reduce health risks to children that result from excessive backpack weight by adopting maximum weight standards for textbooks.

"Schoolwork should not be hazardous to your health," said Assemblyman Frommer. "Yet the number of school kids sustaining back, head, and shoulder injuries from carrying bookbags is up dramatically. AB 2532 will address the potential long term health effects."

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, backpack-related injuries send about 5,000 students a year to emergency rooms nationwide.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- ♦ **Voted "Top of the Class" and one of the freshman legislators with the most potential, *California Journal* 2002 Minnie Awards.**
- ♦ **Most bills signed into law in first term than any other Assembly freshman legislator.**
- ♦ **Named "Urban Park Advocate of 2001", Trust for Public Land.**
- ♦ **Official commendation for service to residents of the City of Glendale**

BRaille STANDARDS LEGISLATION SIGNED INTO LAW

A four year struggle to ensure that blind schoolchildren have access to Braille education in public schools ended in victory when Governor Gray Davis signed Assemblyman Frommer's AB 306, which increases access to Braille materials and puts more Braille literate teachers in the classroom.

AB 306 increases access to Braille instructional materials, including textbooks and computer programs, as well as instructional aides and teachers fluent in Braille. The bill also allocates \$100,000 to community colleges across the state to offer Braille training courses for those who wish to teach the 4,500 blind and visually impaired students of California.

The idea for AB 306 came from Burbank residents Don Burns and Nancy Burns, President of the National Federation of the Blind. Frustrated with the proportion of visually impaired and blind students receiving little or no Braille education, these constituents asked Assemblyman Frommer to carry this legislation.

This year Assemblymember Frommer followed up on AB 306 by introducing Assembly Bill 2326, which establishes a set of guidelines for teaching visually impaired students. This measure creates a task force consisting of parents, teachers, researchers and Braille experts that will report to the Legislature and Governor their findings on teaching California's blind students Braille. This is the first law in the nation to set up such guidelines and standards. ♦

**Statistics on California's
Blind and Visually Impaired**

- ❖ 70 percent of working-age blind people are jobless.
- ❖ The Braille literacy rate is only 10 percent.
- ❖ Among employed blind people, the Braille literacy rate is 93 percent.
- ❖ There are approximately 4,500 blind or severely visually impaired students in California, but only two schools cater entirely for their needs.
- ❖ There are only 50 teachers fully credentialed to teach the blind.
- ❖ Only two colleges offer coursework to those who want to teach the blind.

Why Breastfeed?

- ❑ **It's easy.** The milk is always available to the baby.
- ❑ **It's best for baby.** Breast milk has antibodies in it from the mother that pass to the baby and helps protect him/her against illness and allergies.
- ❑ **Breast milk is easily digestible.** Mothers don't have to worry about their babies being constipated or thirsty, because babies get adequate amount of water from breast milk.
- ❑ **Breastfeeding helps with good oral development.** Breastfed babies have good cheekbone development and jaw alignment.
- ❑ **Breastfeeding is also good for the mother.** Women who breastfeed their children have a smaller chance of getting breast or gynecological cancers.
- ❑ **Breastfeeding burns calories.** A mother can lose much of her pregnancy weight faster than if she were bottle-feeding her baby.
- ❑ **Breastfeeding creates a bond between mother and baby.**

Information taken from La Leche League, www.lalecheleague.org.

**BILL GRANTING RIGHTS TO WORKING MOMS
OF CALIFORNIA BECOMES LAW**

GOVERNOR Gray Davis signed AB 1025, a bill by Assemblyman Dario Frommer, ensuring working mothers have adequate time and an appropriate place to express breast milk at work. The legislation gained bipartisan support in the Legislature as well as from a coalition of medical organizations, women's groups, labor unions, and children's advocacy groups.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding throughout a child's first year, and at a minimum the first six months. Unfortunately, many moms have been forced to give up breastfeeding due to workplace constraints, such as inadequate break time or lack of a proper and sanitary place to express breast milk. Assembly Bill 1025 meets the needs of a working mom while being sensitive to the needs of businesses at the same time.

Wells Fargo, Cigna, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Nestle Corp., and UC Davis are all employers who already have lactation programs established for their employees. ♦

ENERGY EFFICIENCY LEGISLATION

Governor Davis signed legislation by Assemblyman Dario Frommer and Assemblywoman Christine Kehoe (D-San Diego) expanding energy rebates for homeowners and small businesses who install solar, wind, or thermal energy systems on their properties.

AB 29X provides \$50 million for on-site, clean energy production. It was signed by the Governor on April 11, 2001.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CHILD ABUSE VERTICAL PROSECUTION PROGRAM, YOU CAN CONTACT THE OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLANNING AT www.ocjp.ca.gov.
- TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CALIFORNIA'S RESTITUTION FUNDING PROGRAM, VISIT THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS WEBSITE AT www.cdc.state.ca.us.

***FROMMER AUTHORS BILLS TO
FIGHT CHILD ABUSE AND TO
REQUIRE PAYMENT TO VICTIMS***

PUBLIC safety is one of Assemblyman Frommer's top priorities, as reflected by two measures he authored and were signed into law by Governor Davis in 2001.

Assembly Bill 929, allows counties to vertically prosecute all types of child abuse, neglect and exploitation by

expanding this program to include additional types of felony child maltreatment in conjunction with felony child sexual abuse.

Assembly Bill 1003 expands California's restitution funding program by requiring a parolee who receives a monetary award as part of a lawsuit against a prison to automatically pay all outstanding restitution owed to his or her victim from those funds.

In 2002, Assemblymember Frommer authored AB 2499 which increases the statute of limitation on a misdemeanor sexual offense of minors under the age of 14 to 3 years; and applies general discovery procedure to sexual offense cases to allow for the presentation of sexual evidence of character discovered less than 30 days before the start of trial. ♦

***FROMMER LEGISLATION PREVENTS
INSURANCE COMMISSIONER FROM
AVOIDING TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS***

ASSEMBLYMEMBER Dario Frommer's AB 931, signed by Governor Davis, closes a loophole in the Political Reform Act that was utilized by disgraced former Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush to accept luxury trips and accommodations to foreign countries paid for by insurance companies that had matters pending before his department.

***WHAT ASSEMBLYMEMBER
FROMMER SAYS...***

"This measure will close a loophole in the law that Ex-Commissioner Quackenbush exploited to travel the globe first-class at the expense of the very insurance companies who had cases pending before his department. We need ironclad rules in state law to send a message to insurers and commissioners alike that the Department of Insurance belongs to the People of California and is not for sale."

A *Los Angeles Times* article revealed that Quackenbush traveled first class to Europe, Africa, and Asia on the tabs of insurance companies he regulated and failed to disclose those gifts. Assemblyman Frommer's legislation closes a loophole that allowed the Department of Insurance to accept luxury travel gifts from insurance companies and their lawyers on the Commissioner's behalf.

Signed by Governor Gray Davis on September 25, 2001, this bill took effect on January 1, 2002. ♦